


AUTUMN NUMBERS



BARBARA HOLLAND



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BARBARA A. HOLLAND

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AUTUMN

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WINDFALL



REENBACKS slithering
across my desk.
They rustle. Gouged
from envelopes
drifting into piles.

Sticking,
wilted and crumpled; some few torn.
They are mounting. I can hardly
count them. They continue coming.

Where shall I put
tomorrow's payload since today's
still must be organized,
how handle them? Bind them in packs
of twenty and press them down
to fit in tidy packets?

Leaves are drifting into herds
and from the boughs
of abandoned trees in silence
silver coins are falling.

IN THE MIRROR

Your face, square, sure
of itself from over my shoulder
peeks out beside mine
from behind my reflection.

How you do it I shall not
strain to imagine, but you are there
like a low grade fever

Not all the time
but fading until almost
nonexistent. Then strengthening
again to almost a greater
reality than mine.

I wonder
how often, if ever,
others see you there;
if sometimes
you are visible to others,
but not to me,

or visible at times
when I am not,
and if so,
how much of you

how much!

HOLDING ON

Shadows filled the pocket
on his right,
 which was flat
the left one
ran over with colors
 bulging.

He had laughter
tucked into his cuffs
as he stood on the corner
by the lamp post
with both hands clamped
on his bicycle handlebars,
until that one moment
when a sneeze caught him
and they both flew up in his face.

when the bicycle shuddered
stood tall on its wheels
and rattled into traffic
on its own,

 while the sun
stood up on the pedals
shouting brightness--

blindingly alone.

ANOTHER SEASON

In bygone years the sunlight
bit the buildings just this way
in this season by late afternoon.

Now every one of them has come
to life with all its faces,
voices, emotions and events
so clearly that they all
but injure me.

Bricks still
glow almost as with some
certain light within them.

In country towns a new paint
in pastels takes on
an unsuspected vigor
as if to say,
"Here I am."

So many budding Autumns
heaped up upon one another
in piles like flaming leaves
recall as many other times
and places as music

and as many dead beginnings.

DOWN MEADOW SLOPE

Look down the moonsweep
to a march of spruce
and see your own form
naked,

 dancing:
how fireflies come and go

as if from between your ribs
how grasses bristle
through your shins
how you stick on the twigs
of a crouching bush
as if you were a twist of fog.

You are!
but what is lacking
there tonight that seems
to make you real?

END OF AN ERA

*Victory fallen from the Arch
in Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn*



YOU would never be satisfied
with conciliation;
deploring peace talks
you would press your demands
for bombs.

Anyone with as many sharp spikes
and excrescences to embellish
a helmet as you have
could only cry for combat.

Look how you have incited
your horses to rear and plunge
as you lash them to leaping
from the top of the arch.

You have long been pleased
to deafen daily with those trumpets
in your ears. Life without
a continuing clamor
would be unproductive for you.
You have to be Queen Tumult to exist,
to fulfill your imagined destiny.

But as of this date
you have gone too far. A step back
(always a misdemeanor in your code)
a change of footing necessary
to an extra thrust
of your highly unnecessary sword
has unstepped you

and you have been poured
head down in a tumble of scrap metal
cast as your garments
from the rear of your chariot,

secured still by some obstinate
remnant of uncorroded bronze
to your heels, with your foolish sword
menacing pedestrians below you
in Grand Army Plaza.

So much for you,

Senora Machismo!

PLEASE COME HOME



YOU are only a clean
little clump of cloud
out there
on the horizon. Cute:
you look kind of nice
like that:
puffed up and fuzzy
keeping the wide blue
at the edge of the sky
too busy to be a bore.

A pleasant change for both of us:
a time for me to get my darkness
going
filling up with flecks of gold
and whirling into a tight twist
spun at such speed
it almost buzzes in my eyes;
the way I like it.

You never did,
or ever showed me yours,
but hated mine
prided yourself on being blunt
about it, begged me to throw it out.

Yours was a thorny hideaway
crammed to the top
with thumb tacks, turkey claws
and tire treads,
 the kind of hutch
you have to run away from
 to the horizon
to puff up for a while on your ego
and float or ooze oily
as if with innocence, maybe to fool
the idle and the romantic
until the air cools and you flatten.

Then you have to return
if only to shake the flakes of rust
from the spikes on your coffee table.

Of course, I miss you
if looking at you in outline
packed solid with double parked cars
and underfed dogs is what I mean
or hearing one of your usual lectures
still discussing itself in circles
above an empty setting at a table.

SOUTHWARD RUNNING

It is all as it should be;
he shall soon be entering from the North
as I have often seen him,

running

his right arm lifted high
above his head
flourishing a five branched
candelabrum

its small fires flattened
by his speed and bright
with the wine-sharp pallor
of a city evening
against the peach glow
of the arching lamps

running

as if with the pressure
of news to spring
upon the ear and eye

in sparks
in mantra.

ignoring questions
friends and onlookers swept aside

slight curling at the edges
of a skimmed milk moon
and all the sky
widened to five more senses
and dimensions,

running!

NOVEMBER

The lightness and delicacy
or of dried leaves stretched tight
across a spread of twigs
which terminates in crushed claws;

this after sundown
often. Sometimes floating
on the surface of my hair,
fumbling at the root
of my skull or grazing my cheek
as with the touch
of a whisper
saying, Now,

Come now.

I course maps with a finger
count costs
consider the calendar
and cower in forgetfulness
but even under all of that
hard knuckles
and the dried claws
of the dark against the shuddering
glass in the kitchen window

rasps the old hunger
and more of an echo
of a still resounding ache alive;
I want you

and the nights
are afraid for me.

VANDALISM

A smart bite of gravel
which you dropped in my boot
and which gnawed at the stance
of my determination or a muscle
rendered useless
by a bruise;

bullet holes pocked
in the lid of my grand piano
after your last invasion
of my privacy of mind.

These I charge
with damage to my self esteem

not you
with your fuse and matches.

NEW ENGLAND OVERCAST

It sweats outside
today.

There is such a stinginess
with water now

that even mature drops
must be husbanded

and only a damp sigh
may be expected
from clouds.

Remember
how on such days as this

you were so quick
to send me
back to my center of the swirls
of fog that edged out
in feelers
from under the bed,

how accurate
your timing
when you retrieved me
for the sun's return

while madness
was settling in the folds
of the curtains

ready to drip the night
away

with hammers.

REFLECTIONS

It is strange
that no one notices that a bank
of carrot and paprika leaves
extricate the weight
of a drowning morning
with imitation sunlight,

or how brooding
and its attendant panic
make a madness of repetition

as if in the confrontation
of mirror with mirror

until disrupted
in that deadliest of conversations
by the brawling of the winesap wind
and the deep gong
of the sky.

IN THE STRENGTH OF THE MOON

So now you have seen them
where the driveway swings close
to the house;

the slim high spears
planted among the pebbles
like staves,
the swinging lanterns

a spread of antlers
which almost snagged among the branches,
beak thin and curved,
the probing muzzle of a fox

frozen
in the sight of the floodlights
on the porch,

by the loss of identity,
remaining just enough
to break the paralysis

to continue beyond it
and into the woods.

Why then
do you look at me that way?
Perhaps you never should have come here
and have seen them. Maybe because
I was with you

when they passed the house
and it was my driveway.

ALL ABOUT EDDIE

When he writes
the walls around him
blaze like a gauze of sunlight
as when it stretches
in slant sheets
downward to the moss
untorn by branches
through an endless
flow of motes
his musings dazzle
in their up and on,
on streams of brilliance.
humming of that
which ought or should be
which was
 and is
with an insatiable appetite
for oats
 sewn wild!

IN RESIDENCE

These nights your window
loosens a single wing
just one reflected glass
cross-hatched against the dark
creaking

perhaps
as if in gladness

The rectangle behind it glows
as if someone
were there.

No shadow ever seems
to cross it.

The swinging casement
indicates a lack of air
a longing
to leap down and dance
among the leaves

which bounds the window
momentarily
above the shadowed park
and lends it a code of slashes

My heart rejoices
in the glare of the bookstore
on the corner across the street
with its negative blind
rolled down
across the door.

FAMILIAR CREATURES

I know that some one unseen
shared that house
with me

who circled the table
in darkness of thought
around and about
all night

whose typing
came in gusts from the bathroom

who played organ
at night in the grove
outside my window

None of this
had anything to do at all
with tall figures
with the heads of animals

drifting in procession
outside on the curving gravel
of the driveway
with the strength of the moon.

